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TAGS: [CASC](#) [CVIS](#)

SUBJECT: HARTY MEETING WITH GON MFA ON CHILD ABDUCTION

[1](#)1. SUMMARY. On Monday, September 20, 2004, CA Assistant Secretary Maura Harty, Ambassador Campbell, CA Special

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Assistant, and CONOFF met with GON MFA officials B. A. Fadumiyo (Acting Director of Consular and Legal Department) and Sani Bala (Deputy Director of Consular and Immigration Division). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss child abduction issues and to ask for MFA assistance with seven pending child abduction cases in Nigeria. Fadumiyo advised that his office would look into the specific cases, but was not swayed on the merits of joining the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. The A/S advised the MFA of the benefits of the Hague Convention to both the mother and the father, no matter the nationality. Fadumiyo responded that the rights of the father are paramount under GON law unless the mother is financially better off than the father. Even then, Fadumiyo expressed his personal opinion that the father should carry all rights to the children. Fadumiyo and Bala indicated that families should make informal arrangements on child custody, outside the legal system.

[1](#)3. If the GON was not open to the Hague Convention, A/S Harty asserted, then perhaps the MFA would consider negotiating an alternative agreement facilitating parental and consular access in child abduction and custody cases. A/S Harty indicated that the U.S. has signed Memoranda of Understanding with two Middle East countries. Both MOUs emphasize shared principles and establish a framework for consultations and cooperation on facilitating parental access.

[1](#)4. A/S Harty raised with the MFA seven pending child abduction and wrongful retention cases involving 13 American citizen children. She pressed the MFA to allow the left-behind parents access to their respective children, all of whom had been left with relatives when the taking parents returned to the United States. Fadumiyo agreed to investigate the cases and report his findings to the Embassy.

[1](#)5. Assistant Secretary Harty has cleared this cable.

ROBERTS